have major benefits for the development of India's industries, both public and private. High technology trade with the US and other technologically advanced countries would also expand.

(d) Yes, Sir.

New division of energy security

2521. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a new Division of Energy Security has been created in his Ministry;

(b) the objective of creating such a Division; and

(c) the steps that have been taken during the last three years to enhance India's Energy Security?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) and (b) It has been decided to establish an Energy Security Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. The main objectives of the new Division are the following:

(i) To serve as a nodal point in MEA for Energy Security. The Unit would sensitize and assist our Missions abroad in identifying possible opportunities for Indian companies.

(ii) To maintain close coordination with the concerned Ministries and support their international engagement through appropriate diplomatic interventions.

(iii) To support efforts of our corporate entities, in acquiring energy assets overseas, and in building strategic partnerships with foreign companies.

(iv) To promote the transfer of new and emerging energy technologies to India; and

(v) To interface with leading energy security think tanks and experts in India and abroad on energy-related issues.

(c) Energy Security has been an integral part of our bilateral discussions with several of the energy resource rich countries. Our Missions have taken active interest in identifying the emerging opportunities in the energy sector and are keeping Indian companies and concerned Ministries continuously informed of developments in this regard. Government of India and Indian oil companies have concluded several arrangements including investment agreements with many countries for the supply of oil and its derivatives to India, and in most of the cases delivery has begun. In addition, the possibility of bilateral cooperation in the areas of oil, natural gas, petrochemicals, hydrocarbons, non-conventional energy, and joint ventures are also constantly being explored with various countries including Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Brazil, Colombia,

Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Myanmar. The issue of energy cooperation has also been taken up with countries like China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Central Asian countries, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Mauritius, Mozambique, etc. To secure a long-term, cost-effective and secure mode of gas transfer from Iran, India has committed itself to Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Project. We have also formally conveyed India's interest in joining the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project (TAP). Moreover, MEA has facilitated the entry of Indian energy companies in the markets of Latin America for acquisition of oil fields and sourcing of crude oil from Mexico, Venezuela and Ecuador.

In order to enhance energy security of the country, Government are encouraging Oil PSUs to pursue aggressively, equity opportunities in the oil and gas sector overseas. ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) has so far made an investment commitment of over US $ 5 billion and had an oil and gas production of 6.6 MMT (Oil and oil equivalent gas) from properties abroad during 2005-06. Oil PSUs now have a presence in 18 countries.

To strengthen energy security, India has also been holding talks with Nepal on specific hydropower projects. In the same sector, our cooperation with Bhutan has been mutually beneficial.

Possibilities of cooperation in the non-conventional energy front are also being explored. Text of a bilateral civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement has been finalised with the USA. An Agreement has been signed with Brazil for Cooperation in Fuel Ethanol and Bio-fuel and with Thailand for cooperation in the field of renewable energy.

The New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) provides an international class fiscal and contract framework for Exploration and Production of Hydrocarbons in India. In addition, in order to give impetus to the exploration and production of Coal Bed Methane (CBM), an environment friendly clean fuel similar to Natural Gas, Government has since formulated a CBM policy. India is also exploring opportunities for cooperation with other countries, in new areas of energy, such as International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project, Future Gen Clean Coal Initiative, Integrated Ocean Development Programme for gas hydrates, etc.

† World Hindi Conference

†2522. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) up to which categories of the officers of Indian embassies situated in various countries, participated in World Hindi Conference organized recently in the United States of America and the names of such countries together with the details thereof;

(b) the achievements of the above conference;

(c) the extent to which Hindi is used in correspondence, Indian Embassies notification and forms etc., by the Indian Embassies in various countries; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.